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ABSTRACT

This survey attempted to study factors important to making faculty decide to continue or terminate employment at South Texas Community College (STCC). Surveys were e-mailed to 276 full time, regular faculty and 170 adjunct faculty with valid STCC e-mail addresses. Although 54% (150) of the full time faculty responded to the survey, it remains a self-selected straw poll as opposed to a survey utilizing a random sample. Only 20% (34) of part time faculty responded, therefore this report discusses only full time faculty responses. The survey asks the question, "Have you ever seriously considered leaving STCC," and offers three possible responses: (1) No, not seriously; (2) Yes, somewhat seriously; and (3) Yes, very seriously. Respondents also offered employment-related written comments. These comments were classified into three groups, based on how serious the respondent seemed to be about leaving STCC, by a rater who did not know how respondents had self-classified themselves. The research found no significant link between length of time at STCC or years of teaching experience and how seriously the respondent considered leaving. More than 30 items were determined to correlate significantly, including degree to which STCC emphasizes student learning, availability of multi-year contracts, and job security. Research instrument appended. (Contains 14 references and 10 tables and figures.) (NB)

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Faculty Retention Study 2002

2002-2003

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
A Division of Information and Technology Services

in cooperation with the
Faculty Retention and Recruitment Committee
Division of Instructional Services

South Texas Community College
McAllen TX

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The Faculty Retention Study 2002:

Executive Summary

The survey, developed in conjunction with the Faculty Retention Committee, attempted to study factors important to making faculty decide to continue or terminate employment at STCC. The novel scale employed on this survey led to questions concerning the instrument's reliability and validity. Statistical analysis indicates that the instrument has internal consistency and concurrent validity. That is to say that it correctly measures how the respondents felt about the issues under study. Further analysis, however, indicates that the issues chosen for study probably do not predict whether a faculty member will or will not leave STCC.

Although not sufficient to explain a faculty member's decision to leave STCC, some of the issues addressed by this study appear to be highly important to many faculty members, and analysis and interpretation of the Faculty Retention Survey does provide insight. The most important findings are:

- Faculty turnover averaged less than 10% per year since fiscal year 1995-96, indicating that faculty retention is not a major problem at STCC.
- **Over half** of the respondents (56%, 84 of the 150 fulltime faculty members responding) report **not** having seriously considered leaving STCC.
- Only 22% (33 of 150 respondents) report having seriously considered leaving STCC.
- Virtually all of the survey items significantly related with whether the faculty member had considered leaving and were highly interrelated
- A small number of respondents contributed disproportionately to the total number of "Make me want to leave STCC" responses.
- The work of occupational development theorists suggests that this relatively small group of faculty with such a large number of issues making them want to leave STCC may not be a good "fit," in that they've chosen either the wrong institution or the wrong profession.

A brief review of the literature shows that the intra-institutional conflict that seems to underlie many of the items included in this survey is an inevitable, normal and often healthy part of institutional life. Mechanisms that allow a low risk outlet for constructive conflict are a frequent element in organizational design and may lead to development of solutions to institutional.

The Faculty Retention Study 2002:

Background Information

In May of 2001 the Faculty Retention Committee, a committee established by the Associate Dean and Vice President of Instruction, submitted a partially developed questionnaire, along with a plan for administering the questionnaire, to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) for review. The concern of members of this committee was a persistent belief that STCC had a problem in retaining members of the faculty. They proposed to survey the fulltime faculty of the college to determine what caused them to leave or stay at STCC.

The overall design of the questionnaire, as well as concerns about the plan for administering the survey, led the OIRE to suggest several changes and to offer to help redesign the questionnaire. The Faculty Retention Committee accepted this response, and over several months a questionnaire was jointly developed. This questionnaire represented a compromise between the design that OIRE would have liked and the faculty committee's desires. The final instrument attempted to move beyond a mere "satisfaction" survey to more directly assess the importance of various issues on the faculty's desire to remain at or leave STCC.

The newly-merged Faculty Retention and Recruitment Committee was to have arranged to administer the Faculty Retention Survey on Faculty Development Day, January 15, or Faculty Staff Development Day, February 19, 2002, during meetings of the five instructional divisions. When this did not occur, the OIRE offered to put the survey online to allow secure and anonymous faculty participation. The Committee accepted this option, and OIRE conducted the online survey after the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board visit in Spring 2002.

The online survey was available to both fulltime and adjunct (parttime) faculty, although the Committee had requested only that fulltime faculty be surveyed. However, as the responses of fulltime faculty could be distinguished from adjuncts, both groups were encouraged to respond.

During Spring 2002, both the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness researched institutional records to determine the actual numbers and proportion of the faculty that had been retained from year to year. Working independently, the two offices arrived at the same conclusions about actual retention rates of STCC's faculty. These findings helped place the information developed through the survey of faculty into better context, as did a review of literature conducted by OIRE.

Upon completion of this report, a copy was provided to the Chair of the Faculty Retention Committee for his review and comment. After ample time for review, no feedback was received from the Faculty Retention Committee's Chair. Therefore, this document is being made generally available.

Faculty Retention Problem Appears Minimal

A breakdown of faculty loss provided by the Office of Human Resources, and confirmed by OIRE, shows faculty turnover rates from Academic Year 1995-96 through 2001-02 (Table 1, below.)

Table 1: Faculty Loss by Academic Year

Academic Year	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02
Total Number of Fulltime Faculty	54	83	112	145	235	268	290
Total Number of Fulltime Faculty Not Returning the Next Fall	5	6	8	24	27	24	24
Percentage Fulltime Faculty Not Returning	9%	7%	7%	17%	11%	9%	8%
Percentage of Fulltime Faculty Returning the Next Fall	91%	93%	93%	83%	89%	91%	92%

Source: STCC Human Resources Department Information Systems

While the unnecessary loss of any good faculty member is an injury to the STCC community and interpretations of these faculty loss rates may vary, the rate of faculty loss shown in Table 1 averages less than ten percent per year. While the number of individuals not returning to employment with STCC has increased, with the exception of one year this increase has been proportionate to growth in the number of fulltime faculty and the actual number has been quite stable in recent years.

To attempt to put this information into some context, a review of literature was conducted in hope of identifying an appropriate benchmarking device. While there were a number of reports from individual institutions discussing faculty turnover, few appeared to be applicable to a community college or to the sorts of faculty turnover questions (i.e., not primarily concerned with retirement issues) being asked here. The most recent report that seemed to apply was a 1997 report on the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. (NCES, 1997) According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in their survey of 528,260 fulltime college faculty,

- Twenty-two percent of fulltime instructional faculty indicated that they expected to leave their current position within three years. (p. v)
- Ten percent of Instructors and fourteen percent of Lecturers without tenure reported being very likely to leave higher education for outside employment within three years. (p. v)

- Seven percent of fulltime faculty indicated they were likely to retire in the next three years. (p. iv)
- Among faculty who strongly intended to leave higher education, forty-four percent indicated they were very dissatisfied with their jobs overall. By contrast, only eleven percent of those not expecting to leave expressed overall dissatisfaction with their jobs. (p. v)

If this information can be used as a benchmark, then STCC's retention of faculty members is, indeed, very acceptable as compared to NCES data for the U.S. as a whole.

Table 2 (below), based on information received from Human Resources, shows the reasons for leaving STCC recorded in exit interviews with faculty. While reasons for leaving provided by faculty during an exit interview or the categorization of the faculty member's reason for leaving selected by the Human Resources Department may not capture the whole story behind a decision to leave, this information provides additional insight into the nature and scope of faculty turnover at STCC.

Table 2: Reasons Faculty Gave for Leaving STCC: 1995-96 through 2001-02

Reason for Leaving	Count	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Program/Department Closed	1	<1%	<1%
Involuntary	3	2%	3%
Unsatisfactory Performance	4	3%	6%
Retirement	4	3%	9%
Did Not Sign Contract	2	2%	11%
Attend School Fulltime	5	4%	15%
Abandoned Position	6	5%	20%
Accept Other Position with College	8	7%	27%
Did Not Meet SACS Requirements	9	8%	35%
Resigned	9	8%	43%
Personal Reasons (Family, Health, Domestic)	19	16%	59%
Moved to New Location	22	19%	78%
Accept Other Employment	26	22%	100%

Source: STCC Human Resources Department

Faculty loss represented in several categories in Table 2 may not reflect faculty dissatisfaction with any aspect of employment at STCC. If so, then nothing would have prevented the loss of these faculty members. These data further clarify and reduce the overall scope of the faculty retention "problem" and suggest that intensive, continuing study of faculty loss is not essential at this time.

Faculty Retention Survey Instrument, Response Rates, Generalizability, Validity and Reliability

The Instrument

The instrument (see Appendix) used for the survey portion of this study was locally designed. While review of literature did not reveal any fully developed and tested instruments that would serve the purpose of the committee, OIRE was able to identify several that seemed to be well constructed, have items that seemed to meet local needs or issues, or otherwise serve as credible guides to construction of a faculty retention questionnaire. So, while the STCC instrument was constructed *de novo* in a joint effort by the membership of the Faculty Retention and Recruitment Committee and the staff of OIRE, it was not constructed without reference to available models.

The final version, designed as an online survey accessible only by password, was completely anonymous. It consisted of thirty-one items hypothesized as affecting fulltime faculty members' decisions about staying in or leaving employment at STCC. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each affected their decisions about staying/leaving, in what direction("stay" or "leave"), and to what degree ("somewhat important," "very important.") A "not important" option was also provided on the assumption that some members of the faculty would find some items simply irrelevant to their own decisions about continued employment at STCC. The intention of these choices was to try to capture respondents' senses of whether each item made them want to stay or leave and how strongly, or whether it was simply not important to them either way.

Respondents were also asked to identify

- whether they were fulltime or adjunct,
- how many years they had worked at STCC,
- the number of years of teaching experience in higher education they had, and
- if they had ever seriously considered leaving STCC, to which they had three choices
    - No, not seriously
    - Yes, somewhat seriously
    - Yes, very seriously.

These responses allowed distinguishing between fulltime and adjunct (parttime) faculty. They also allowed grouping and review of data in light of the length of time respondents had been employed at STCC (assumed to be an indicator of the continued acceptability of employment here), whether they had higher education teaching experience elsewhere – calculated as total years of higher ed teaching experience minus years of STCC faculty employment (assuming that experience elsewhere would provide a comparative basis for the STCC experience), and by the degree to which they had actually considered leaving STCC (assumed to be a proxy for overall satisfaction with employment at STCC.)

A few issues were addressed as both positive and negative statements in separate items. These reflected genuine and unresolvable concerns about interpretation and meaning. By using both negative and positive statements, it was possible to accommodate differing perspectives.

Response Rates

Passwords and links to the survey were e-mailed to 276 fulltime, regular faculty and 170 adjunct faculty having valid STCC e-mail addresses. One hundred fifty fulltime faculty responded (fifty-four percent) but only thirty-four (twenty percent) of the adjunct faculty responded. Given the low rate of adjunct faculty responses, this report will discuss responses from the fulltime faculty only.

Generalizability

Although fifty-four percent of the fulltime faculty responded to this survey, it remains a self-selected straw poll as opposed to a survey utilizing a random sample. Accordingly, generalizing these results to the entire faculty should be done with caution. At the same time, if the only faculty members concerned about any issue presented in the survey were those who responded, the number captured here represents a large enough percentage of the whole to warrant attention in some instances.

Reliability and Validity Issues

In an effort to measure how the items of interest affected the faculty member's feelings about continuing to work at STCC, rather than mere satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the Faculty Retention Survey employed a scale that was not intuitively apparent to the respondents. This led to questions about the validity and reliability of the instrument.

To address reliability and validity issues, an analysis of concurrent validity was run using the Kruskal – Wallis Test, a non-parametric test similar to analysis of variance, which does not violate the assumptions of the underlying scales. This analysis indicates that the survey item responses are significantly ($p<.01$) different for three identifiable groups of respondents:

1. Those who report not having seriously considered leaving STCC
2. Those who report having "Somewhat" seriously considered leaving
3. Those who report having "Very Seriously" considered leaving.

This is a strong indicator of the concurrent validity of the instrument as a whole and addresses internal reliability, since that is a necessary condition for concurrent validity.

Predictive Validity

Results of the Faculty Retention Survey do not indicate that the items included on the survey are actually those that motivate faculty to leave STCC. A small number of faculty reported that most of the items were "Very Important" in making them want to leave. If this survey identified factors sufficient to impel a faculty member to leave, then these individuals would not likely be here for more than a single year. To test whether this was the case, responses were compared to length of employment by STCC. Responses did not relate to length of employment. The issues studied in this survey may be important to faculty, but they are not sufficient to predict a faculty member's leaving.

Faculty Groups Based on How Seriously Leaving STCC Has Been Considered

Based on the faculty member's response to the question "Have You Ever Seriously Considered Leaving STCC?" the faculty can be divided into three groups and their group membership is related to their responses to most other survey items.

Table 3 (following) shows the breakdown of respondents based on how seriously they have considered leaving. It is notable that over half of all respondents indicate that they have never seriously considered leaving STCC.

Table 3: Have you ever seriously considered leaving STCC?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
No, not seriously	84	56%
Yes, somewhat seriously	31	21%
Yes, very seriously	33	22%
Missing	2	1%
Total	150	100%

Among the 150 fulltime faculty who responded to the survey, 148 responded to the item asking them to self-report how seriously they had considered leaving STCC. Seventy-six of these respondents did not add written comments to the instrument. Nine made comments dealing only with the survey instrument itself and one wrote a comment that had no relationship to employment. Sixty-two of the respondents who answered the question about whether they had considered leaving STCC also added written comments in the open-ended "comments" block of the survey instrument. (See Appendix for instrument.)

As a check on respondents' self-reported consideration of leaving employment at STCC (i.e., "Not seriously considered," "Somewhat seriously considered,' and

"Very seriously considered" leaving), the respondents' employment-related written comments were classified into three groups by a rater who did not know how the respondents had self-classified themselves. Table 4 represents the results of this separate classification.

Table 4: Respondents Divided Into Groups Based On Their Comments

Group Based on Comments	Number of Respondents
Apt to be from someone who has not seriously considered leaving, (someone expressing no issues with their employment)	26
Apt to come from someone who has somewhat seriously considered leaving (someone expressing a single mild issue)	14
Apt to have very seriously considered leaving (someone expressing multiple or very strong issues)	22
Total Respondents Making Comments Relevant to Groupings Above.	62

A *chi-square* test comparing this grouping of sixty-two respondents with the respondents' self-report of how seriously they have considered leaving showed a significant ($P < .01$) relationship. This indicates that the responses to the question of how seriously the faculty member had considered leaving match the faculty members' feelings as expressed in their written, open-ended comments.

Items Not Related to How Seriously the Faculty Member has Considered Leaving

The analysis was extended in an attempt to determine how the survey items were related to the faculty member's report of how seriously he or she had considered leaving. However, no significant relationship was found between the following two demographic items and how seriously the faculty member had considered leaving:

1. How long the faculty member had worked at STCC
2. How many years of teaching experience the faculty member had

The Kruskal – Wallis Test (described in the *Reliability and Validity* section above) showed that, of the 31 items hypothesized to be important in making a faculty member want to remain or leave STCC, 30 were significantly ($p = .01$) related to how seriously the faculty member has considered leaving STCC (see Table 5.) Only the item "Amount of time required for community service work" did not show a significant relationship with how seriously the faculty member had considered leaving.

Items Related to How Seriously the Faculty Member Had Considered Leaving

The 30 items found to be related ($p = .01$) to how seriously the faculty member has considered leaving, are listed in Table 5 (following). The list is ordered by the degree of association as measured by Kendall's *tau b*.

While not identical to the Pearson *r* measure of correlation (the square of Kendall's *tau b* does not equal the amount of variance explained by the relationship), this statistic does show the relative strength of relationships. In this study Kendall's *tau b* primarily indicates how well each item separates the three groups of faculty.

Table 5: Thirty Survey Items that Correlate Significantly with How Seriously the Respondent Has Considered Leaving STCC

Survey Item	Kendall's *tau b*
Degree to which STCC emphasizes student learning	.48
Number of required office hours	.42
Degree to which you are appreciated in your department/program	.42
Your satisfaction with your office	.42
Your degree of job security	.40
Availability of multi-year contracts	.40
The courses you get to teach	.40
Degree to which STCC allows academic freedom	.39
Number of course preparations you are required to do per semester	.37
Amount of time allowed for class preparation	.37
Your fringe benefits	.37
Your ability to balance work and personal life working for STCC	.36
Degree to which STCC practices faculty governance	.34
The community's respect for STCC	.34
Chances for moving up to a higher position	.34
Nearness to family or friends	.33
Consistency in applying policies between divisions/ departments	.33
The amount of pressure or stress in your work environment	.30
The amount of overload you teach	.29
Your total annual earnings from STCC	.29
Degree to which STCC does not practice faculty governance	.29
Amount of pressure to avoid grade inflation	.29
STCC's importance to the community	.29
Degree to which STCC undermines student learning	.28
Degree to which STCC does not allow academic freedom	.26
Amount of time required for committee work	.25
Your partner or spouse's career aspirations	.25
Amount of pressure to inflate grades	.24
Living in the Rio Grande Valley	.22
Amount of time required for registering students	.16

Generalized Leave/Stay Factor and Faculty Institution/Profession Mismatch

Another striking feature of the correlational analysis of the survey items is the extent to which the items correlate among themselves. A review of the Kendall's tau b correlation matrix shows that of 496 possible correlations among these thirty-one items, 432 are significant (p = .01). This high degree of intercorrelation points strongly to the existence of a single major underlying factor, a general "leave/stay" factor, which is most coherently revealed by an analysis of individual respondent scoring.

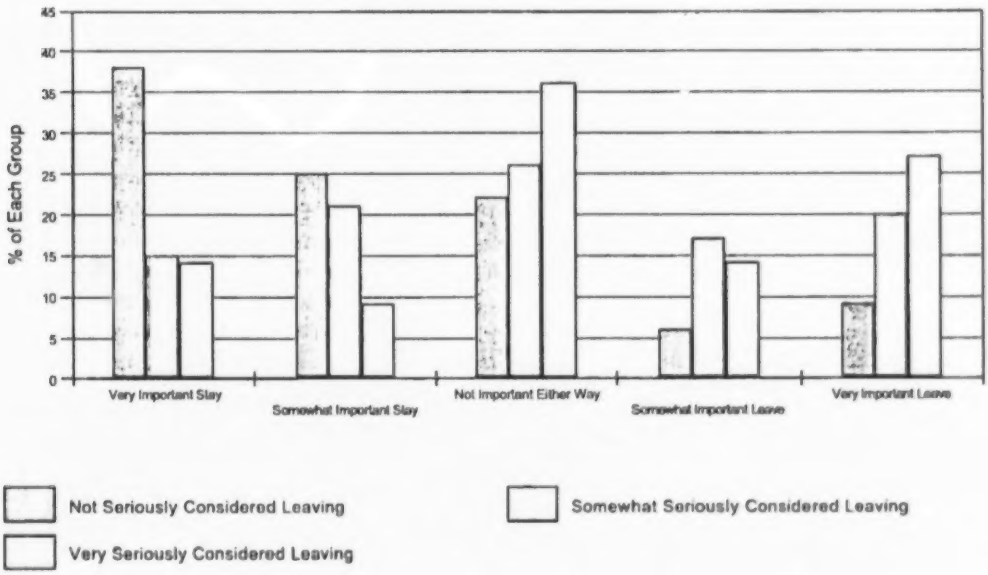
The most notable results shown in Table 6 (below) were the high frequencies of "Stay" responses for the "Has Not Seriously Considered Leaving" group. This suggests the degree to which the items on the survey did not negatively affect their decisions to stay at STCC. Conversely, the "Has Very Seriously Considered Leaving" group had a disproportionate number of "Not Important" or "Leave" responses to the items hypothesized to be factors in faculty retention or nonretention at STCC.

Table 6: "Seriousness" Groups by Numbers of Different Responses

Type of Response	Not Seriously Considered Leaving N=84 or 56% of Total		Somewhat Seriously Considered Leaving N=31 or 21% of Total		Very Seriously Considered Leaving N=33 or 22% of Total	
	Count	Percent in Group	Count	Percent in Group	Count	Percent in Group
Very Important – Stay	965	38%	147	15%	139	14%
Somewhat Important -- Stay	644	25%	198	21%	93	9%
Not Important	568	22%	251	26%	368	36%
Somewhat Important -- Leave	155	6%	162	17%	139	14%
Very important – Leave	219	9%	196	20%	278	27%
Total responses	2551		954		1017	

Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Figure 1 – "Seriousness"Groups by Importance: % of Items at Each Level of Importance for Each of the Three Groups



Graphed as shown in Figure 1, faculty members who indicated that they had not seriously considered leaving employment at STCC tended to be "loaded" toward the one end of the continuum of responses. The "Somewhat. . ." and "Very Important in Making Me Want to Leave" responses pose much smaller percentages of all responses for this group than for either of the other groups. They also had the smallest percentage of "Not Important Either Way" responses among the three groups. About eighty-five percent of all their responses were either positive or neutral.

In contrast, for those who reported themselves as having very seriously considered leaving STCC, the "Not Important" response was far the largest percentage of all responses, followed by the "Very Important in Making Me Want to Leave" response. Their responses tend to "load" from the "Not Important" toward the "Very Important in Making Me Want to Leave" end of the continuum of responses.

Tables 7 and 8 (below) show that how seriously a faculty member considered leaving STCC is largely but not entirely influenced by his or her overall response to the issues considered on this survey. They also clearly indicate the very global nature of the "leave/stay" factor as shown by a strong tendency for many respondents to give similar responses to many of the items.

Twenty-four (17%) of all respondents (Table 7 below) gave "Very Important" or "Important in Making Me Want to Leave" responses to sixteen or more of the thirty-one items on the survey, accounting for over forty percent of all such responses. By contrast, sixty-nine (47%) of all respondents gave "Very Important" or "Important in Making Me Want to Stay" responses on sixteen or more of the thirty-one items. The twenty-four respondents who gave the highest number of "Very Important" or "Important in Making Me Want to Stay" responses (Table 8 below) were responsible for over thirty percent of such responses.

Table 7: 24 Respondents with the highest number of "Very Important" and "Important" In Making Them Want to Leave Responses

Distribution of Respondents Having over 50% of Their Responses Indicating "Very Important" or "Important" in Making Them Want to Leave STCC by Degree of Having Seriously Considered Leaving								
Considered Leaving. . .	**28 of 31***	**26 of 31***	**23 of 31***	**21 of 31***	**20 of 31***	**18 of 31***	**17 of 31***	**16 of 31***
Very Seriously		1	2	1	2	1	2	3
Somewhat Seriously	1			1	1	2	2	2
Not Seriously						1		3

*31 = Total number of items on survey to which such responses were made.

Only six respondents answered "**Very** Important in Making Me Want to Leave" to half or more of the thirty-one items. They accounted for seventeen percent of all such responses. These six respondents, about five percent of all respondents, were distinctively more negative than any other group of respondents and the degree of negativity they contributed to the outcome of this study was disproportionate to their number.

Table 8: 24 Respondents with the highest number of "Very Important" and "Important" In Making Me Want to Stay Responses

Distribution of Respondents Having over 50% of Their Responses Indicating "Very Important" or "Important" in Making Them Want to Stay at STCC by Degree of Having Seriously Considered Leaving								
Considered Leaving. . .	31 of 31*	30 of 31*	29 of 31*	28 of 31*	27 of 31*	26 of 31*	25 of 31*	24 of 31*
Very Seriously								
Somewhat Seriously	1		2					
Not Seriously	5	2	1	2	3	1	3	3

*31 = Total number of items on survey to which such responses were made.

The existence of a generalized feeling that conditions at STCC make a faculty member want to stay poses no difficulty for the faculty member or the institution. For faculty with a large number of items that make them want to leave, however, the question is raised whether any reasonable institutional solutions can be found that would improve their desire to stay.

In this case, the work of occupational development theorists such as Donald Super (1990) and John Holland (1997) may provide some explanation and guidance. Both of these theorists, despite their differences, commonly stress the need for a good match between the individual and his chosen occupation. The lack of a good fit between and employee and their job, or the institution for which they work, may lead to employee unhappiness which is the fault of neither the employee nor the institution.

Given the number of factors that make them want to leave STCC, some of these faculty respondents might serve themselves by examining whether they truly fit the profession or have chosen the institution in which they will be most pleased to work. In any event, it is doubtful that an institution could make the number of changes this survey indicates would be necessary to accommodate them.

Important Issues for All Faculty

Although, as discussed above, a few faculty respondents had such a wide variety of issues with STCC that it is unlikely the college could satisfy them, some of the items appear to reflect issues important to many faculty – including those not seriously considering leaving. Based on the number of "Very Important in Making Me Want to Leave" responses, the following list of eleven survey items were rank-ordered as issues most commonly selected as "Very Important" in making the faculty member want to leave. Table 9 shows the rank of each item for all faculty and for all faculty <u>except</u> those who have seriously considered leaving.

Table 9: Items Most Often Reported as "Very Important" in Making the Faculty Want to Leave STCC

Item	All Fulltime Faculty	Fulltime Faculty Who Have NOT Seriously Considered Leaving
	Rank	Rank
Degree to which STCC does not allow academic freedom	2	1
Availability of multi-year contracts	1	2
Your total annual earnings from STCC	5	3
Your degree of job security	6	4
Consistency in applying policies between divisions/departments	7	5
Degree to which STCC does not practice faculty governance	3	6
Degree to which STCC undermines student learning	4	7
Amount of pressure to inflate grades	11	8
The amount of pressure or stress in your work environment	9	9
Degree to which you are appreciated in your department/program	8	10
Degree to which STCC practices faculty governance	10	11

It was notable that the rankings by frequency of these items, while not identical, are sufficiently similar that the same eleven items appear in both lists. This indicated that the issues represented by these items were important to faculty who were content to continue working at STCC as well as those who had considered leaving. As such, these were likely to represent issues important to the maintenance of faculty morale.

While subtle, a difference existed in the rank order of frequency for faculty members who had never considered leaving and those of all faculty members. This difference may be of importance, too. For faculty reporting not having seriously considered leaving STCC, two of the top four issues (multi-year contracts and job security) appeared to be related and to have a relationship with earnings (ranked third). The first item, "degree to which STCC does not allow academic freedom" may bear a relationship to the aforementioned three in respondents' thinking if their assumption was that practicing what they conceive to be academic freedom would jeopardize their continued employment with the college.

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (1954, 1977, 1998) suggests that physiological needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) and needs for personal security virtually always take primacy over higher-level needs. To the extent that earnings from continuous employment are essential for faculty members to meet basic personal and familial needs, any factors that have potential to threaten their ability to earn and provide are likely to be highly salient to them. This is an area that may need further exploration or provision of greater assurances to the faculty.

Of course, it is also remarkable -- in an era noted for job changing and faculty mobility and in an institution of higher education having neither faculty tenure nor multi-year contracts -- that **over half** of STCC's responding faculty have not seriously considered leaving the college. STCC must be doing some things very **right** to achieve such results. It may be worthwhile trying to identify what factor or combination of factors led to this result if the faculty being retained are those STCC wishes to keep.

Functions of Social Conflict in Organizations

In the analysis and interpretation above, it was suggested that a few of the faculty selected so many "Makes Me Want to Leave" responses that they might want to consider whether they are a "good fit" with either the teaching profession or this institution. Some of those faculty members may make the alternative claim that they have a superior vision for how STCC should function to better fulfill its mission. Even members of the faculty who report that most of the items included in survey make them want to stay may agree that some of the eleven items listed in the *Important Issues* section appear problematic to them. This is the environment in which conflict within STCC occurs.

Lewis Coser (1956) has suggested that such intraorganizational conflicts, which do not threaten the core values of a society or group, are signs of good health and that expression of these conflicts may well prevent the development of more serious conflicts that threaten the continued or functional existence of the group. His analysis shows that suppression of conflict is more likely to lead to core conflicts that threaten the group or institution's continuance.

Coser (1956) recommends "safety valve" mechanisms – those that permit social conflict with minimal risk to the group's continued existence – healthy ways for dealing with social conflict. By identifying acceptable forums in which the conflicts that underlie some of this survey's items can be addressed, STCC would be allowing for the safe expression of this conflict and accepting that conflict is an inevitable and even healthy part of institutional life.

Martin and Meyerson (1988) and others (e.g. Clark, 1980; Geertz, 1973; Grieco, 1988; Shor, 1986; Tierney, 1991) suggest that organizational cultures are always subjectively interpreted by those within them. They argue that, due to differences in rank, training or background, it is unlikely and probably impossible that all those within an organization will have the same perspectives on the organizational culture and events it generates.

Martin and Meyerson (1988) theorize that every organization can be understood from an integrationist, a differentiational, and a fragmentation perspective. High ranking managers, they write, tend to see the organization from an integrationist perspective consonant with their leadership role in inculcating shared values and

enthusiastic implementation of established policy and procedures. Those at lower levels and those whose roles are somewhat ambiguous or who have a higher tolerance for ambiguity tend to group into the differentational or fragmentation perspectives of organizational culture and behavior. Martin and Meyerson (1988) argue that these perspectives have both emotional and political "grounding" and are unlikely to change or evolve significantly.

Some organizational conflict is the inevitable result of differences in perceptions and, according to Martin and Meyerson (1988), differences in perceptions are themselves inevitable. The most serious organizational conflict occurs, in their opinions, when one or more of these perspectives are repressed, a notion shared with Coser (1956). They advocate developing shared understandings of the legitimacy of differences in perspectives among employee groups, without an expectation that some grand, unifying scheme will resolve conflicts to everyone's satisfaction.

At STCC, as in most colleges and universities, fulltime faculty members have very different roles from nonteaching members of the college community. It is not surprising, then, that they also have unique perspectives on the policies and procedures of the college. Even allowing for a within-group range of satisfaction from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied with policy and procedure, it appears likely that fulltime faculty as a whole share some general understandings or interpretations that differ from those of other groups within the college community. To a degree, then, conflicts appear inevitable. It follows that some employees will accept employment elsewhere rather than remain in an environment they perceive as uncongenial and a certain amount of employee turnover is inevitable.

Tierney (1991), writing specifically of community colleges and the cultural conflicts they experience, notes "[C]ommunity colleges are sites where proponents of opposing economic and social ideologies compete for dominance of their beliefs and values upon the goals and character of the colleges" (p. 132) and "When beliefs, values and symbols of one group clash with what is significant for another group, we find cultural conflict."
(p. 132) Given the multiple roles and expectations of community colleges (e.g., academic transfer education, vocational/technical education, developmental education, continuing education and workforce training), a degree of conflict about policies and procedures and institutional values is to be expected it seems, if Tierney (1991) is correct in his assertions.

Conclusion

If STCC chooses to accept the notions about human needs, the nature of organizations in general, and of community colleges in specific, reviewed briefly above, then some level of disagreement about the management of critical issues, policies and procedures is not only inevitable, but also a healthy expression of

the validity of differing perceptions and understandings of the life and work of a community college. The average number of fulltime faculty members leaving STCC annually does not appear to be excessive, and may reflect a realistic adjustment for many of those former employees. Those who remain – and those who leave – share some concerns in common that the college may wish to address.

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Appendix:

Faculty Retention Questionnaire

SOUTH TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Faculty Retention Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be used by the Faculty Retention Committee to examine some issues which may affect the retention of faculty at STCC. This survey is anonymous and cannot be traced to you in any way.

PASSWORD REQUIRED: ☐

1. I am: ☐ Full-time Faculty ☐ Adjunct Faculty

2. I have worked at STCC For
   - ☐ Less than 1 full year
   - ☐ Between 1 and 2 years
   - ☐ Between 2 and 4 years
   - ☐ More than 4 years

3. How many years of teaching experience in higher education do you have? (two digit number input) ☐

4. Have you ever seriously considered leaving STCC?
   - ☐ No, not seriously
   - ☐ Yes, somewhat seriously

☐ Yes, very seriously

(**Note to readers**: To display the online instrument as it appeared to respondents, the remaining portions of the instrument are continued in landscape format on the following pages. In the process of taking the original online survey document to an inactive form in this Word document, and then reposting it as an electronic, but inactive version on the OIRE web pages, and changing the format from portrait to landscape, we find that the final document always skips a page number between the portrait and landscape pages because an "odd page" section break is automatically inserted. We have not been able to find the code that is causing this problem. However, please be assured that there is not a p. 22 that has been omitted. The next page should be p. 22, rather than p. 23. Our apologies for any inconvenience this persistent page numbering glitch may cause. Dr. Gail Dantzker, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness)

	In Making Me Want to Stay this Factor is:		In Making Me Want to Leave this Factor is:		Either Way this Factor is:		
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important		
1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	1	STCC's Importance to the Community
2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	2	The community's respect for STCC
3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	3	Living in the Rio Grande Valley
4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	4	Nearness to family and friends
5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	5	Your total annual earnings from STCC
6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	6	Your partner or spouse's career aspirations
7	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	7	Chances for moving up to a higher position
8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	8	Degree to which you are appreciated in your department/program
9	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	9	The amount of pressure or stress in your work environment
10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	10	Degree to which STCC emphasizes student learning
11	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	11	Degree to which STCC undermines student learning

12	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	12	Your ability to balance work and personal life working for STCC
13	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	13	Your degree of job security
14	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	14	Your fringe benefits
15	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	15	Degree to which STCC practices faculty governance
16	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	16	Degree to which STCC does not practice faculty governance
17	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	17	The courses you get to teach
18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	18	Number of course preparations you are required to do per semester
19	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	19	Amount of time allowed for class preparation
20	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	20	The amount of overload you teach
21	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	21	Amount of time required for committee work
22	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	22	Availability of multi-year contracts
23	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	23	Amount of time required for registering students
24	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	24	Amount of time required for community service work
25	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	25	Degree to which STCC allows academic freedom
26	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	26	Degree to which STCC does not allow academic freedom

27	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	27	Amount of pressure to avoid grade inflation
28	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	28	Amount of pressure to inflate grades
29	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	29	Consistency in applying policies between divisions/departments
30	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	30	Your satisfaction with your office
31	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	31	Number of required office hours

Type Comments Below:

Thank you very much for participating!

Submit | Clear Survey

Statement of Equal Opportunity

No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program sponsored or conducted by South Texas Community College on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability.

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